

Colorado Commission on Affordable Health Care Questionnaire  
From a Telehealth Perspective

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**1. What do you think are the fundamental telehealth cost drivers and why?**

The primary drivers for telehealth are:

- Chronic Conditions
- Consumers
- Dually Diagnosed Conditions
- Specialty Care Access
- Cost Reduction/Cost Control
- Reduce Unneeded Transport/Triage
- Physical Retention
- New Delivery/Business Models

Additionally, health care is becoming more retail centered and patients are leaving the traditional delivery style and seeking out more cost efficient options (CVS, Walmart, etc.) Additionally, the millennial generation is technology driven and access more health care services through their mobile devices.

**2. What are the barriers to using telehealth to reduce costs?**

Technology, as a broad topic, presents a host of potential barriers to successful telehealth/telemedicine delivery. Examples of barriers include human factors (engineering), access to adequate, reliable bandwidth and the cost of work-flow redesign. Preliminary findings indicate there exists a lack of confidence in older populations to successfully navigate an unfamiliar software platform and are therefore reticent to use the service platform.

**3. Can you list up to three things that you are doing to address telehealth costs that are unique?**

The Colorado Telehealth Network obtains subsidies for subsidy-eligibly broadband contracts that support telehealth expansion in Colorado. The mission of the Colorado Telehealth Network is to maximize access to health care services, especially in underserved regions of the state, through information and communications technology. The Colorado Telehealth Network was awarded the State Innovation Model contract in 2015 to expand broadband services and capabilities to 300 new sites in Colorado; the Colorado Telehealth Network is currently connecting 215 sites.

The Colorado Telehealth Network, convenes the Colorado Telehealth Working Group (CTWG); a voluntary stakeholder meeting consisting of members from the State Health Departments, payers, health plans, hospital systems, etc. The propose of the Colorado Telehealth Working Group is to increase access to healthcare through telehealth, promote fair and practical telehealth policies for Colorado, and inform policy makers on the

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current state of telehealth in Colorado. The Colorado Telehealth Working Group supported Colorado Medical Board (CMB) Guideline for the Appropriate Use of Telehealth Technologies in the Practice of Medicine (40-27) and its Policy Statement Regarding the Provider/Patient Relationship (40-3).

The Colorado Hospital Association supported and advocated for House Bill-1029; which creates reimbursement parity across payers in Colorado for care that can be appropriately delivered through telemedicine. Additionally the Colorado Telehealth Working Group will advocate for the adoption of statutory language consistent with the Federal State Medical Board Cross State Licensure Compact.

The Colorado Telehealth Network is conducting a pilot program to assess the efficacy of a telehealth platform for patients after discharge in three hospitals.

**4. Is there any supporting data that demonstrates a reduction in cost?**

We do not have any evidence or data from our organization. However, there is data available online that shows telehealth's potential to significant impact and reduce health care costs.

The Medicare telehealth expansion environment faces two opposing and simultaneously complimentary dynamics:

- A. 10,000 Baby Boomers become eligible for Medicare services every day.
  - a. Overall, telehealth is used to fill service gaps and this costs hospitals significant investments in staff, equipment, and service support.
- B. Telehealth, has been shown to significantly reduce costs for health systems for a wide range of health conditions and treatment modalities when utilized as an alternative to in person encounters between providers and patients.

It is more cost effective for Medicare patients to be treated by their primary doctors at home rather than in person when medically appropriate. Medicare benefits will drive telehealth decisions and the utilization of telehealth services by major health plans. The Colorado Telehealth Network supports the statement by Healthcare Informatics that "Congress should: amend the allowable originating sites of care beyond those currently stipulated by CMS to include interactions with patients from wherever the patient is located, including the home, where cost-effective and clinically-appropriate; eliminate the geographic restrictions on telehealth; allow expanded use of "store and forward capability" to aid long-term passive monitoring of chronic diseases; expand modalities beyond live (real-time) voice and video to active monitoring between clinicians, patients and care providers; update Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) and Healthcare Common Procedure Coding System (HCPCS) to cover in-home monitoring or clinician/patient non-centralized exchanges, including shared decision making; encourage nationwide efforts to harmonize federal and state efforts to address the challenges of licensing clinicians to serve patients across traditional state boundaries."

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**5. Where do you see waste in the system?**

Patients in rural areas currently drive long distances to receive health care services, many of which could be offered through telehealth. The travel required presents a time and cost barrier to rural communities which means that they are less likely to seek out medical care, especially medical care.

Additionally, telehealth has, historically, delivered provider services when patient care gaps exist. By not fully utilizing telehealth, health care providers are increasing spending unnecessary staff, equipment, space, etc.

**6. What are the principal barriers to telehealth?**

Please see answer to number 2.

**7. What would you change to make things better related to telehealth?**

The single biggest change that could improve telehealth would be coding and payment approval by CMS. Additionally, the Cross State Licensure could have a tremendous impact if Colorado were to join.